

07-42

MB Docket No. 07-42

RECEIVED & INSPECTED

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FCC - MAILROOM

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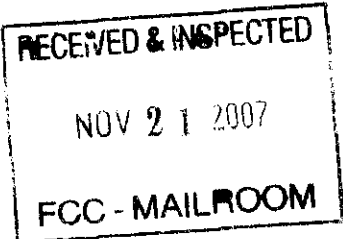
ILLINOIS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

DISTRICT OFFICE
7 E. FAIRCHILD STREET
DANVILLE, ILLINOIS 61832
(217) 431-1988



WILLIAM B. BLACK
DEPUTY REPUBLICAN LEADER

SPRINGFIELD OFFICE
314 STATE HOUSE
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706
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November 8, 2007

Mr. Kevin Martin
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Room: 8-B201
Washington, DC 20554

Re: NFL Network and Other Independent Programmers

Dear Chairman Martin:

I am writing to urge the Federal Communication Commission to take action to resolve the ongoing dispute between vertically integrated cable operators, like Comcast, and independent programming channels NFL Network and Big Ten Network. I have received a number of constituent letters and emails complaining about this stalemate. Many of those letters note that those cable systems require them to purchase other sports networks -- such as Versus and the Golf Channel -- that those constituents never watch; and that my constituents are troubled by cable companies' discrimination against NFL Network and against high-quality non-sports independent channels in favor of less popular channels that the cable companies own.

To address these constituent concerns, I have introduced legislation in the Illinois General Assembly. House Bill 4169, the Fair Access and Independent Resolution Act (FAIR Act) creates a dispute resolution mechanism that will allow for a quick resolution through an independent arbitrator in the narrow instances where cable companies own channels that compete with independently owned channels. The arbitrator would select between the competing proposals for carriage. As a result, disputes will be quickly and fairly resolved.

I turn to you since I understand that the FCC has opened a rulemaking proceeding (MB Docket 07-42) to consider program carriage issues such as these -- particularly as they relate to independent and diverse channels.

I have seen a number of recent press stories noting that -- just like NFL Network and other independent sports channels -- non-sports independent channels face discrimination from big cable companies that own channels of their own, and that some independent channels like the Oxygen Network are choosing to sell themselves to large media holding companies rather than to try to continue as stand-alone businesses. It is not a good trend since this increasing concentration will reduce media diversity and consumer choice.

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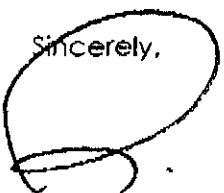
Mr. Kevin Martin

I also note that in connection with another high-profile sports channel carriage dispute – the one between Comcast and the Mid-Atlantic Sports Network (MASN) in the Washington, DC area in 2005 – the FCC's decision to appoint an arbitrator to settle the dispute caused the parties to reach a negotiated solution. I would urge the FCC to consider changing its rules to facilitate appointment of an arbitrator in disputes like the one involving the NFL Network, so they can be resolved more quickly (preferably through negotiation between the parties) and with consumers' interests foremost in mind. If such a mechanism were in place, it might help persuade the cable companies to negotiate a carriage deal with NFL Network before my constituents are deprived of the NFL Network game telecasts that begin this season on Thanksgiving night.

For your consideration and review, I have enclosed a copy of our legislation in Illinois as well as several newspaper articles that underscore the significance of this issue.

Thank you for reviewing these matters.

Sincerely,



William B. Black
State Representative
104th District

WBB/jas

Cc: Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein
Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell

November 14, 2007

Mr. Kevin Martin
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW:
Room: 8-B201
Washington, DC 20554

Re: **Big Cable dispute with Independent Programmers**

Dear Chairman Martin:

I am writing to urge the Federal Communication Commission to take action to resolve the ongoing dispute between vertically integrated cable operators, like Comcast, and independent programming channels NFL Network and Big Ten Network. I have received a number of constituent letters and emails complaining about this stalemate. Many of those letters note that those cable systems require them to purchase other sports networks — such as Versus and the Golf Channel — that those constituents never watch; and that my constituents are troubled by cable companies' discrimination against NFL Network and against high-quality non-sports independent channels in favor of less popular channels that the cable companies own.

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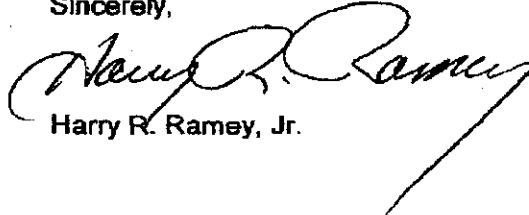
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Thank you for reviewing these matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harry R. Ramey, Jr.", with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Harry R. Ramey, Jr.

Cc: Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein
Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell

ILLINOIS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



DAVE WINTERS
ASSISTANT REPUBLICAN LEADER
68TH DISTRICT

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Mr. Kevin Martin
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW:
Room: 8-B201
Washington, DC 20554

November 14, 2007

Re: NFL Network and Other Independent Programmers

Dear Chairman Martin:

I am writing to follow up on a number of constituent letters and emails I have received complaining that the cable systems to which they subscribe in Illinois are refusing to carry NFL Network. Many of those letters also note that those cable systems require them to purchase other sports networks - such as Versus and the Golf Channel -- that those constituents never watch; and that my constituents are troubled by cable companies' discrimination against NFL Network and against high-quality non-sports independent channels in favor of less popular channels that the cable companies own.

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Thank you for reviewing these matters.

Sincerely,

DAVE WINTERS
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
68th District

cc: Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein
Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell

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